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ABSTRACT

In this book, techniques are thoroughly outlined for counselors to use during group counseling to facilitate the process. Specific examples are given to illustrate problems that might arise. Specific examples and sections for junior high/middle and secondary school counselors are a part of this book, offering guidelines for establishing and conducting an effective group counseling program. Suggestions are presented for assessing and evaluating the program addressing questions of accountability to administrators, teachers, students, and parents. A list of suggested readings is provided for those who are interested in learning more about group counseling. After an overview on group counseling these chapter topics are presented: (1) the need and advantages of group counseling; (2) the conceptual model of group counseling; (3) the group counselor's role; (4) group counseling techniques; (5) practical applications; (6) possible problem situations and ways to handle them; (7) establishing a group counseling program in a junior high/middle or secondary school; (8) gaining support for a group counseling program in a school; and (9) assessment and evaluation. An appendix includes a diagram of the conceptual model; a table of the developmental self-concept process model; a parent questionnaire; a personal rating sheet; a guidelines and assessment form; and reprinting of ethical guidelines from the Journal for Specialists in Group Work. (ABL)

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A Practical Self-Concept Approach For The Helping Professional

By
Benjamin Cohn, Ed. D. and
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Group Counseling:
A Practical Self-Concept Approach
for
The Helping Professional

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A Practical Self-Concept Approach for The Helping Professional

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Group Counseling

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This book is dedicated to our families,
our students, our colleagues and our clients.

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Introduction

In the summer of 1959, Dr. Ben Cohn went to the University of Illinois to serve as a research assistant to Dr. Merle Ohlsen. Dr. Cohn was in the process of analyzing kinescoped data from a federally funded project on group counseling. It was during this summer that he got to know Dr. Ohlsen, Dr. Walt Lifton and Dr. George Gazda.

Part of the summer reward was to co-author an article with Dr. Ohlsen. The article described a method of evaluating a productive group from an unproductive group by tabulating the different roles the participants played during each session.

That fall, when Dr. Cohn returned to his regular position with BOCES in New York, he received a phone call from Dr. Ohlsen suggesting that he apply for federal funds to administer some of the techniques he had

learned from his data groups in schools in Westchester County, New York.

Dr. Cohn followed his advice and received a grant from the U.S. Office of Education to conduct group counseling with acting out underachievers in junior high school.

Working with Dr. Cohn were Dr. A Mead Sniffen and Dr. Charles Combs and Dr. Edward Gibian. They conducted a number of groups in three local school districts: Croton-Harmon, Lakeland and Yorktown Heights. They met each Monday night to review their tapes, to develop guidelines and procedures and to learn and write about their experiences.

The following year Dr. Cohn was approached by the U.S. Office of Education to run a five-day symposium with selected leaders in the field of group work to pull together guidelines for future research in this "new" field of group counseling. People came together for a week at the Harriman Estate in Harriman, New York, to talk and write about group counseling and its future.

The group was cloistered for the five days. All

needs were provided for by the estate; no one left the grounds until the project was concluded. The report of this symposium was published by the U.S. Office of Education and reprinted by the State of New York and made available to school counselors in New York.

Meanwhile, other counselor educators around the country began to experiment with the concept of counseling in groups.

In the 1960s Dr. Cohn and Dr. Larry Osborne became friends. Dr. Osborne became interested in group counseling and continued his interest while teaching at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Group counseling began to grow in popularity. The early experimenters and users were often asked to take part on panels at local, state and national conventions. Although they were from different parts of the country, and each had interpreted the process individually, they were often amazed at the similarities. The process seemed to have a common thread, the techniques were basically the same and the experiences and outcomes were predictable.

Over the years, the process has not changed significantly. What have changed are the choices a counselor can make as to the role of the counselor, the selection process, the orientation and the subject content. Some counselors feel the role of the counselor should be "non-directive;" others feel the counselor should lead the process. Some counselors feel the participants should volunteer; others feel this is not an issue. Some like to use activities to stimulate the group; others like the totally verbal approach.

Over the past 25-30 years, Dr. Cohn and Dr. Osborne have made certain observations and had experiences which have led them to write this practical, how-to, "nuts and bolts" book describing a self-concept approach to group counseling for the helping professional. It presents a workable model for the group counseling process. A clear- picture presentation is given to explain how and why this model works so well.

In this book, tried and true techniques are thoroughly outlined for counselors to use during group counseling to facilitate the process. Specific examples are given to illustrate problems that might arise. The Au-

thors' combined experience lends itself to a careful presentation of how the group should proceed through the 12- to 15-week program that is recommended.

Specific examples and sections for junior high/middle and secondary school counselors are a part of this book as well, offering guidelines for establishing and conducting an effective group counseling program. An outstanding feature included is a presentation and script that counselors can use to encourage the support of building administrators, teachers, parents and students to build support for a successful program.

In addition, suggestions are presented for assessing and evaluating the program addressing questions of accountability to administrators, teachers, students and parents.

A list of suggested readings is provided for those who are interested in learning more about group counseling.

This book is intentionally written to be prescriptive for those counselors wishing to establish and conduct successful counseling groups.

About the Authors

Ben Cohn is a counseling psychologist in private practice in Westchester County, New York, who, along with A. Mead Sniffen, Charles Combs and Edward Gibian, did some of the pioneering work in the application of group counseling to acting-out, underachieving adolescents.

For the past 30 years he has been a counseling consultant to public schools throughout the country. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Kentucky. His doctorate is in guidance and counseling from Indiana University. He has written about, taught and conducted group counseling for the past thirty years, both nationally and internationally.

Ben received the first George E. Hutcherson

Counselor of the Year Award presented by the New York State Personnel and Guidance Association. He was recognized by the Association for Specialists in Group Work for his contributions to group counseling research and practice with the Eminent Career Award presented during the 1985 American Association for Counseling and Development Convention in New York.

Ben's life and contributions were featured in the March 1990 issue of the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*.

Larry Osborne is on the counselor education faculty of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and he has known and worked with Ben Cohn since 1966. He is also an Adjunct Program Associate at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, and has been an adjunct faculty member or visiting professor at seven universities.

He has conducted training programs, workshops and convention presentations throughout the United States and in England and Mexico. He has also held elected and appointed professional offices on the local, state, regional and national levels, published widely in

professional journals, co-authored books and edited national publications.

Larry's current professional interests include group counseling and career and leadership development counseling.

Chapter 1

An Overview

Suppose we get several old-fashioned pendulum-type grandfather clocks . Let us hang them on a wall and arrange their pendulums so that they will start out beating each at a different angle, that is, out of phase with each other. In a day or two, we shall see that all the pendulums are beating in phase, as if locked together.

Stalking the Wild Pendulum, Bentov Itzhak

Although we cannot expect all people to "tick" together, we do know that to move in rhythm with the world around us is the smoothest way to make it through life. People sometimes fall out of rhythm, or become confused by what is expected of them by their peers, their employers, their schools or their families.

Group counseling offers a person a place to express concerns. The rest of the group can help point out that there *are* solutions, some already known, and others

not yet thought of, to solve problems.

Instituting groups provides a forum to bring a sense of belonging to members, helping them to feel in harmony with the world around them, like those grandfather clocks hanging on the wall.

Group counseling allows people to see themselves more realistically; it helps them understand their problems; and, most importantly, it can teach them how to make wiser decisions.

In group counseling, people learn valuable life-skills. Group members learn how to handle problems as they arise. They learn a decision-making process that will help them to identify their feelings, examine those feelings in relation to facts and decide how to proceed from there to best handle the situation that is causing the problem.

As members of a group work together, the members remain individuals, yet as they share their feelings and concerns, the group process becomes more dynamic. With that, a sense of excitement grows, giving confidence to each group member along with a sense of

belonging and involvement.

Group members learn to communicate their feelings and ideas, and they learn to receive constructive feedback from those who are living through the same experience. New insights are gained from hearing how someone else might solve the same problem, and old insights are reinforced when they aid another group member in dealing with a problem.

Group counseling is an effective method of helping people. The following chapter discusses the need for group counseling, as well as the advantages this method offers both counselors and group members.

Chapter 2

The Need

It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
Howard Ruff

Most counselors in schools, institutions and clinics have many more people to see than time to see them. The demand for counseling grows constantly. Arranging groups allows counselors to accommodate the increasing demand for counseling, while providing a service that will help clients learn the skills necessary for handling the problems they face.

Basically, there are four advantages to conducting group counseling over individual counseling:

the economy of process
the life-like quality of the group

the advantage of having more input to assist with problem resolution
the availability of peer pressure to facilitate change

Group counseling is a more economical way to see a large number of clients at one time. As many as eight to ten people may be part of a group.

It is, also, more like everyday living. Humans are gregarious beings. Most experiences are related to other people and most of the hours of each day are spent with others. Even when alone, people are thinking of others and their relationships with them.

Activities and attitudes are affected by people's relationships with others: parents, brothers and sisters, family members, peers, neighbors, co-workers, classmates and friends.

People usually relate to others in groups: on dates, at parties, at meetings, in discussion groups, at work, at play, when eating and when learning. Group counseling capitalizes on the human need for others.

In addition, more than one helper is available in group counseling. The counselees have two responsibilities. One is to talk about and work on resolving their own concerns. The other is to help fellow group members to the same end. Each counselee is available to help the other group members see themselves more realistically, understand how their problems occur and learn how to make wiser decisions. Having other frames of reference available is a tremendous advantage in accomplishing this goal.

Group counseling takes advantage of peer pressure as a means of facilitating change in counselees. Because individuals need to be accepted and liked by others as well as maintain equal status in their peer group, the process provides the counselor with an advantage point to cause change. Peer pressure is a major influence. It forces individuals to explain, explore, justify and change their positions, if need be, to maintain their status with others. The group counselor, as the leader, controls the effect of peer pressure in a positive social, emotional and educational direction.

Group counseling is a "natural" process that not

only permits counselors to see more clients, but due to the life-like quality of the group, it allows more input for problem resolution, and utilizes peer pressure to help facilitate change.

Chapter 3 discusses how to format a group and gives a process to follow to insure a successful experience.

Chapter 3

The Conceptual Model

The reverse side also has a reverse side.
Japanese Proverb

Once it has been determined that group counseling is the preferred approach, the process used should be well-planned and consistently followed. This chapter discusses the Conceptual Model for group counseling. It is a format that can be used no matter who the participants of the group are. It does not matter if the group has been formed because of a common problem or life situation, or if it is a random group of people who seem to have very different stated needs.

This process begins with exploring the self, and how the self is perceived by the group member. The

process then moves on to why the members have these perceptions of self. If there are conflicts or problems, it will have to be decided what can be done about making the changes that the members have chosen. The self-concept conceptual model is based on several assumptions, including:

Everyone has a self-concept.
People have problems because they are not what they would like to be.
People are what they are because they were taught to be that way.
People have the power to change if they so choose.
Everyone wants to be better.

There are three phases to the self-concept model that must be followed in sequence during the group counseling process. They are:

PHASE I: The Phenomenological Phase - Getting to Know You (see figure 1).

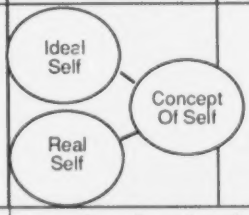
In this phase of group counseling, it is the *counselor's role to see group members the way they*

The Conceptual Model

Figure1

Conceptual Model:

A Developmental Self-Concept Approach

Approaches	PHASE I (Phenomenological)	PHASE II (Analytical)	PHASE III (Behavioristic)
Individual Goals	Identify and express feelings	Investigate and validate causes for feelings	Take responsibility for feelings make decisions
Developmental Self-Concept Process		Very Influential People Parents Teachers Siblings Peers	Re-educative Process Consolidation Follow-up
Sessions	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10 11 12
Group Progress	**Testing** Competing for position	**Trusting** Relating, accepting, sharing	**Working Through** Discussing, analyzing, considering alternatives	**Terminating** Summarizing and planning

see themselves by helping them clearly identify and express feelings about themselves. The group member's perception of self is of key significance.

During this phase, it is important for the counselor to investigate:

The Ideal Self (how one would like to be)
The Real Self (how one feels she or he is)

The premise here is: the more I am the way I would like to be, the better adjusted I am. If what I would like to be is different from what I feel I am, the more I am in conflict with myself or others.

During this Phase the group members move through the stages of, **Testing** and **Trusting.**

Testing refers to attempts by the group members to see if the counselor can control the group counseling process and not allow anyone to get hurt, physically or emotionally. The members will also be testing to see if their peers can be **trusted** to not embarrass them or put down what they are saying.

It is also during this phase that members learn to

trust that no one in the group will talk about issues discussed during group counseling with people outside the group. This is usually of utmost importance to group members. Since they are revealing themselves to each other, they must feel that their feelings will not be a topic of conversation over lunch.

The counselor should allow the group members to talk, hear their own voices and compete for positions in the group. ***Trusting*** *occurs when the members sense that the counseling process is a constructive, helpful, and supportive experience.*

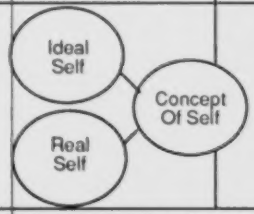
The counselor should be sure that the members are supportive of each other, by encouraging supportive statements and interceding immediately to prevent negative situations from developing between members.

PHASE II: The Analytical Phase - How did you get this way (see figure 2)?

It is during this phase that the group members begin to see outside of themselves to determine how they became who they are. Because the way people feel about themselves has been taught to them by the influ-

Figure 2
Conceptual Model:

A Developmental Self-Concept Approach

Approaches	PHASE I (Phenomenological)	PHASE II (Analytical)	PHASE III (Behavioristic)
Individual Goals	Identify and express feelings	Investigate and validate causes for feelings	Take responsibility for feelings make decisions
Developmental Self-Concept Process		Very Influential People Parents Teachers Siblings Peers	Re-educative Process Consolidation Follow-up
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ential people in their lives, they should look at their experiences in growing up to better understand why they are the way they are so that they can decide whether or not to change.

As they grow up, people form habits of behavior designed for protection. For instance, many teenagers bite their nails as a way of relieving adolescent stress or anxiety. As adults, these teenagers may continue biting their nails even though the need for the protection has long disappeared The habit of behavior may still be used even though it is inappropriate and may need to be changed.

Most people tend to remember the negative things that have happened to them. A child may walk into a room and not break anything and get no positive reinforcement. But, if the child breaks something in the room, the parent reprimands the child, the behavior is negatively reinforced and a defense system is established. The child may not like being in that room, be more careful when in the room or wonder about his or her ability to keep from breaking things. Generally, negative experiences are reinforced. People become conditioned to these negative experiences which then begin to color

their perceptions of other experiences.

Because of this negative reinforcement, people tend to, and often do, misinterpret the motives of those people who are important to them. Soon they find themselves questioning themselves: **Is there something wrong with me that results in these negative experiences?**

For example, when we are traveling down a highway and hear a police siren behind us, why do we at first think *we* are doing something wrong? Why are we also afraid to be evaluated or to try something new? The odds are just as good that things will turn out well as that they will not if we allow ourselves to try new ways of thinking and behaving.

If people only remember their failures, or times when others have made them feel like failures, they may think of themselves as failures and behave that way.

Group counseling helps members move from understanding how their concerns have been developed, to doing something about them.

<u>During Phase II, the counselor's role is to:</u>
Investigate possible positive reasons why things may have happened to the members.
Question the seemingly negative motives of those people talked about.

The goal here is for each individual group member to identify and validate causes for his/her feelings. Most of these feelings and the behaviors that go with them are a result of building a defense system based on one's perceptions of experiences. *During this "Working Through" stage of the Analytic phase, members should be investigating, analyzing and trying to work through the feelings and causes for their behaviors and attitudes.*

For example, when John tells how his father continues to criticize him, the counselor should ask John why he feels his father does it. The other group members should also be asked why they think his father criticizes him. John should be shown that there are a number of possible reasons for his father's behavior.

John: "My father doesn't think I can do it right."

Mary: "John's father may feel impatient and want him to learn more quickly."

Tom: "He may need to feel he is helping his son."

Bill: "His father may be depressed about other things in his life."

Sue: "He may be afraid he is not doing a good job with his son."

Whether the truth about the motives behind the father's behavior is known or not, the doubts planted by the group's discussion allow John to consider changes in how he feels or behaves toward his father as well as toward himself.

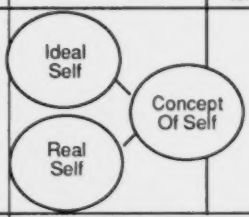
PHASE III: The Behavioristic Phase - What are you going to do about changing (see figures 3)?

During this phase, members help each other find alternative ways of behaving, ways of changing thoughts and attitudes and ways of becoming the kinds of people they would like to be.

By asking group members to help each other, each member has others to help with solutions. The

Figure 3
Conceptual Model:

A Developmental Self-Concept Approach

Approaches	PHASE I (Phenomenological)	PHASE II (Analytical)	PHASE III (Behavioristic)
Individual Goals	Identify and express feelings	Investigate and validate causes for feelings	Take responsibility for feelings make decisions
Developmental Self-Concept Process		Very Influential People Parents Teachers Siblings Peers	Re-educative Process Consolidation Follow-up
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member feels the support of others, learns to ask for help and can expect others to be supportive and helpful. The group members soon realize that, as people, they are not alone in their concerns or quest for solutions.

The Re-educative Process ends with a "Consolidation and Follow-up." During this time the counselor begins closing the group counseling process by *encouraging the group members to talk about solutions to their concerns, behaviors to be tried and attitudes to be changed (see figure 4).*

The counselor also engages the group members in discussing what they will do when the group terminates, including continuing to be supportive of each other, providing help when needed, asking for help, validating feelings by asking questions without anger and being assertive rather than defensive.

<u>During the last four sessions the counselor should:</u>

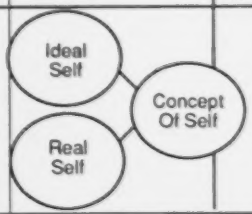
Summarize frequently.
Reinforce good suggestions.
Emphasize the cohesiveness of the group.
Reassure each member that he or she is not

alone and can become the person he or she would like to be.

Understanding the flow of the group counseling process is essential. This includes a knowledge of the phases that group counseling passes through, the stages the client goes through and the characteristics of these phases and stages. This chapter outlined what to watch and listen for from the group members during these stages, and ways to respond to what happens in the group to facilitate the process. Chapter 4 discusses in detail the role of the counselor in applying the principles of the Conceptual Model.

Figure 4
Conceptual Model:

A Developmental Self-Concept Approach

Approaches	PHASE I (Phenomenological)	PHASE II (Analytical)	PHASE III (Behavioristic)
Individual Goals	Identify and express feelings	Investigate and validate causes for feelings	Take responsibility for feelings make decisions
Developmental Self-Concept Process		Very Influential People Parents Teachers Siblings Peers	Re-educative Process Consolidation Follow-up
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Group Progress	**Testing** Competing for position	**Trusting** Relating, accepting, sharing	**Working Through** Discussing, analyzing, considering alternatives	**Terminating** Summarizing and planning

Chapter 4

The Group Counselor's Role

[The group counselor]...must maintain that degree of impartiality and of non-involvement which will permit him to discern at all times how far group thinking has proceeded along its path toward solution of the problem.

Handbook of Group Discussion,
Russell Wagner and Carroll Arnold

The group counselor:

- is always in control of the group.
- is always on time.
- does not cancel sessions.
- keeps the process moving.
- uses good techniques.
- follows the Model in a sequential way.
- immediately intervenes if someone is to be hurt.
- accepts all statements as true.

realizes the power he or she has with the group.
does not make self-disclosures.
maintains a professional demeanor at all times.
represents the school and community.
does not become personally involved in discussions of sex, politics or religion.
listens carefully for what a member is really saying.
listens carefully for what the member is feeling.
protects the group's right to confidentiality.
keeps her or his statements direct and uses as few words as possible.
does not rehash his or her statements.

Control. *The counselor must be in control of the group and group process at all times.* If a member is difficult to handle or interferes with the progress of the group, the counselor should first ask the group for help. However, if the group members are ineffective in handling the problem, the counselor must take the responsibility to make the process work, even if it means to expel

the troublesome member.

Group members should feel that they have the freedom to express themselves and have a voice in the process. However, final control lies with the counselor.

The counselor, by using good techniques, subtly directs the group discussion and the process. Members should feel that the counselor is in charge and knows where he or she is leading them. There should be the feeling that the process does and will work in their best interests.

Members should be taught not to always defer to the counselor, but they should know that the authority is always there for direction and protection. This is taught early on when the counselor leads and directs the group's content and interaction. If the counselor is sensitive and responsive in directing the group in dealing with feelings, the group members will begin to feel more comfortable and have more confidence in the counselor.

Be on time. *Counselors should serve as a positive example.* Sessions should begin and end on time. It is part of the commitment.

Do not cancel sessions. *Canceled sessions infer that the group is not important to the counselor* and, therefore, should not be very important to the members.

Move the process. *The counselor should have a variety of questions to ask if the process falters,* such as:

What kind of person would you like to be? And, why?

What are some of the things you like to do? And, why?

What don't you like about school?

If you had three wishes what would they be?

What kind of relationship do you have with your brothers and sisters? Parents? Friends?

The counselor should use such techniques as asking questions, reflecting content, probing and clarifying (covered in later chapters) so that members feel the counselor is involved in trying to understand them and, at the same time, is moving the process along.

Use good techniques. *Counselors should know their counseling techniques.* Techniques are a very

important part of the process (see Chapter 5).

Follow the Sequential Model. *The counselor must follow the Model in sequence: Phase I, Phase II, Phase III* (see Appendix 1).

Phase I allows the counselor to identify a problem or problems common to most of the group members. These problems become those to analyze in Phase II and to seek solutions for or make decisions about in Phase III.

Intervening. *There are times when counselor intervention becomes necessary.* Counseling is a learning process and the discussion should be constructive. If it seems that a member is going to be hurt by someone in the group, the counselor should step in and use the incident as material to be investigated by the group.

For example, have John who made the hurtful statement tell why he is trying to hurt Mary. Then ask Mary, who was hurt, how it felt when the statement was made. The group can discuss the possible reasons for hurting someone and the kind of responses the hurt person may choose. The counselor should reinforce the

concept that group counseling is to be constructive and helpful.

Accept. *The group counselor accepts all statements made by the members as being true.* If the counselor has a question about a member's statement, then the group should be asked, "Group, how do you feel about what John just said?" The rule of thumb is to let the group, rather than the counselor, evaluate the statement.

Realize your power. *The counselor should always be aware of the power of his/her statements.* The counselor's statements carry much more weight than the statements of the group members. Value statements that infer right or wrong, good or bad, should be used very cautiously.

It is better to have a group member make the value statement so that the other members can feel free to agree or disagree.

For example, John says he has four B's and an A in English. The counselor has to be very careful about making a value statement here. Rather than saying,

"That's great, John," an approach might be to say, "How does that make you feel, John, to make four B's and an A?" And/or, "How do you feel about John's grades, group?"

Beware of self-disclosure. *Group counselors should not become a member of the group by sharing sensitive personal experiences.* The counselor must maintain the position as the leader of the group.

By self-disclosure and sharing sensitive personal experiences, the counselor may be teaching the group members that the leader has weaknesses, is also vulnerable and may not be able to help them.

The counselor may also be self-disclosing for personal reasons not necessarily for the benefit of the group. The leader also becomes more of a group member by sharing personal experiences, and the distinction between authority and peer group member becomes confused.

If a group member asks the counselor, "Why don't you share some of your experiences with us?" the counselor should respond, "I am here to help you with your

concerns, not to work on mine."

Be professional. *The counselor should always remember that he or she is a professional* who is educated, experienced and obligated to proceed in an ethical, moral and socially responsible way. To behave in a professional way increases the group members' confidence in the counselor's skill.

Be responsible. *If the counselor is hired by a school or community, he/she is expected to uphold the values, policies and laws of that organization.* At the first session of the group, the members should be informed that if they violate any of these values, policies or laws, the counselor has the responsibility to report the infraction.

Also, if a person is in danger of hurting himself or herself or someone else, the situation must be reported to the proper authority for the protection of those involved.

Limit hot topic discussions. *Group members can talk about sex, politics and religion, but only as to how they feel about them and how these topics make*

them feel.

The counselor should be careful not to take a stand on these critical topics. By taking a stand, the counselor chances alienating some members of the group. In a school setting, there is also the possibility that the counselor will be vulnerable to criticism from parents or community.

Listen. *The counselor listens carefully to what is being said.* Be sure to understand what the group member is saying and make certain the other group members clearly understand as well. Important statements should be reinforced and restated for the benefit of the group, either by a group member or the counselor.

Ensure confidentiality. *The counselor should not talk about the specifics discussed during group counseling or about individuals in the group.* If asked by another professional about a group member, it is better to explain the need for confidentiality or talk in generalities. These statements can be in the form of recommendations, specific activities or suggestions. For example, "John is doing well in group; he probably could benefit from a little more attention and support."

Make direct, concise statements. At times a counselor will tend to over-talk. Nothing turns a group off faster than a person who talks too much. *The Counselor's statements should be short, concise and to the point. There should be no lecturing, preaching or pontificating.*

No rehashing. Sometimes the counselor will make a statement, not be sure the group understood it, then restate it. This implies a lack of intelligence on the part of the group members. They tend to resent this. *If the counselor is not sure an important point was understood by most of the group, ask a group member to restate what was said.*

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Chapter 5

Conducting Group Counseling

It takes a great man [woman] to make a great listener.
Arthur Helps

To successfully facilitate the group counseling process, the counselor must know and use good counseling techniques. Lacking the ability to use these techniques is like looking at a map and planning a trip across the country by car, but not knowing how to drive.

Group Counseling Techniques. A major goal in group counseling is to help people be specific in describing their feelings and incidents. People have been taught over the years to always leave a little edge, so if they need to change a statement or defend themselves, they have a little that was not said. People don't totally commit themselves to any statement, unless they feel they

must. Generally, people will qualify their statements to give them a way out (just as we have done by saying "generally" at the beginning of this sentence).

There are three defensive statements that group members use to keep from being specific or held accountable. These are:

Generalities
Qualifiers
Inconsistencies

For example, John makes a **general statement.**
John: "I'm an adolescent."

What does that tell the group about John, other than his general age? The counselor should respond:
Counselor: "I don't understand, John. What do you mean when you say you're an adolescent?"
John: "You know. I have typical problems of an adolescent."
Counselor: "I'm not sure, John. What typical problems do you have?"

An example of a **qualified statement** might be:

Mary: "I get along pretty well with my friends."

Counselor: "I'm not sure I understand. What do you mean by getting along pretty well?"

Mary's qualified statement needs to be investigated.

Jimmy's mother: "Jimmy is a good boy. He just seems to get into trouble sometimes."

Counselor: "You think Jimmy is a good boy, but you are concerned about the trouble he gets into. What are some of these concerns you have about Jimmy?"

Jimmy's mother has just used an **inconsistency** to allow her to give a little information without committing herself. If she feels threatened by the discussion, she can still back out.

There are **eight** basic counseling techniques that counselors use to help members be specific in describing their feelings and behaviors. They are:

Questioning
Probing
Clarification
Reflection of Content

Reflection of Feeling
Interpretation
Support
Silence

Questioning is a technique that allows the counselor **to ask for *objective* information**.

This differs from **Probing**, which is a **question requesting *subjective* information.**

For example, a **question** would be, "How many brothers and sisters do you have?" A **probe** would be, "How do you feel about your brothers and sisters?"

Clarification is a versatile technique for the counselor. It can be used in a variety of ways:

to clarify a statement of feeling for a group member
to clarify a number of statements for the group
to clarify a group of related statements so the members can focus on one particular point
to control the discussion of the group
to add information the group may not have

expressed

For example:

Clarification for the member.

Mary: "I hate English. The teacher always yells."

Counselor: "You don't like English because your teacher yells a lot."

Another example:

John: "My Math teacher doesn't teach us anything."

Susan: "Mr. Jones is unfair. He has favorites."

Mary: "Yeah, I hate school."

Jimmy: "Wouldn't it be nice if we didn't have to go to school?"

The counselor could clarify in a variety a of ways:

Clarification for the group.

"It sounds like many of you have bad feelings about school."

Clarification to allow the group to focus.

"Let's talk about some of the specific things that bother us."

Clarification to control the direction the group will go in

and to talk about the effect others have on the group members.

"It seems that many of us have trouble with teachers. What bothers us about the way they treat us?"
Clarification to add the topic of fear of failing.

"It sounds like some of us have trouble with teachers, others have trouble with the subject, others have trouble with the way teachers act and some of us are afraid of failing."

The **reflection of content is a non-threatening response.** The counselor merely reflects back to the group member practically the same words the member has used.

Mary: "I'm having a hard time in my English class."

Counselor: "You're having a difficult time in your English class."

Reflection of feeling is a sensitive response. If used correctly, these reflections let the member know that the counselor not only hears what she or he is saying, but also understands how that person feels.

Mary: "I'm having a hard time in my English

class."

Counselor: "You feel English is difficult for you and that really bothers you."

When using this technique, *the counselor listens carefully to the words the member is using but is also conscious of the feeling that is being expressed.* Helping a member realize his or her feelings is **crucial** to the counseling process. People tend to avoid examining their feelings. We prefer to try to deal only with facts. Because our feelings are private, they tend to be tender and sensitive.

Although this technique is the most effective in bringing about change, it must be used cautiously. *The danger is that the counselor will expose feelings before a member is ready to deal with them. Another more serious danger is that the counselor may go beyond the feeling of the member and make an inappropriate interpretation of which the member was not aware.*

Interpretations can be made, but only by other members of the group. Because the members have equal status, the interpretation can be dealt with as a possibility, rather than a statement of fact by an authority.

The counselor should be sensitive to the fact that an interpretation was made and the member may not be able to accept it. The counselor should reinforce the concept that the interpretation is only a possibility to be considered, not a statement of fact.

Diagrammatically speaking (see figure 5), if we consider a continuum from the conscious to the unconscious, a reflection of content is a reflection of a statement that the member is well aware of (A), while an interpretation is a reflection of a statement that the member was not conscious of, and generally, comes as a surprise (C). A reflection of feeling is the reflection of a statement or feeling that is somewhere between the conscious and the beginning of the unconscious. The closer to the dividing line the more effective the reflection (B). The member's response will generally be, "Yes (pause), yes, that's it."

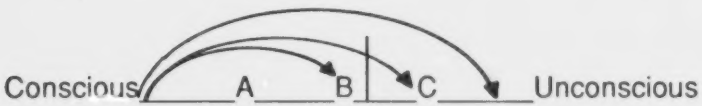


Figure 5

When reflecting feelings, words should be chosen

that are soft and gentle. Words such as concerned, bothered, dislike, like, fear and anxious are easier to deal with than hard and definitive words such as worried, afraid, hate, love, depressed, scared, foolish, angry and mad.

Counselors should never make interpretations to the members. Counselors can make interpretations to themselves as tentative hypotheses to be checked-out with the members in the form of questions, but never as statements. Counselors are not trained in therapy, and that is what they would be doing by making interpretations to a group member.

Making an interpretation of conscious material could trigger the release of unconscious material the member has not and is not ready to handle. Counselors should only reflect material the member has expressed in words. Other material, verbal or non-verbal, should be questioned.

An example of an inappropriate interpretation is:

Mary: "I'm having a hard time in my English class."

Counselor: "You feel English is difficult and

failing is hard for you to accept."

This statement is inappropriate because Mary has not yet expressed a fear of failing. However, if *group members* say that Mary may be afraid to fail, then this would be acceptable, because it is easier for Mary to agree or disagree with group members than with the counselor. Remember, the counselor is viewed as an authority and his/her words carry more weight.

Support is a technique to be used cautiously. To give support also means it can be taken away, and that can be threatening. Giving support to one member of the group also means not giving it to other members, and that could result in jealousy.

Another difficulty with giving support to a member of the group is that it may result in the person feeling self-conscious. The member may not like the attention and the feeling that she or he is being made to seem special or different.

***Support** is a helpful response to encourage participation in the group's discussion, but it is generally better if the group members support one another rather*

than the counselor taking on that role. A counselor may help this to happen by saying, "Group, how do you feel about what John just said?"

Silence is a technique chosen by a counselor to accomplish several different objectives, including:

Put pressure on the group to take responsibility for continuing the discussion

Let the group digest what has been said

Allow an individual to think through a feeling or thought

Silence is being used inappropriately as a technique when it occurs because the counselor does not know what to say next. Silences should not be so long that the group becomes passively resistant. *A rule of thumb: silences should not last more than 15 seconds.*

Employing the techniques outlined in this chapter will help the counselor move through the various phases of the conceptual model with confidence. Using the right tool for the job always reaps the best results.

Chapter 6

Process Overview

How are you going to see the sun if you lie on your stomach?
Ashanti proverb

Chapter 3, The Conceptual Model, outlined the group counseling process. Presented there was an overview of the three phases. Now, it is time to take a more practical look at how the process meshes with the techniques described in Chapter 5. This chapter begins with a review of the three phases of the Conceptual Model and the goals of each phase (see figure 6).

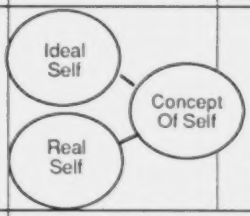
Phase I (the initial three or four sessions) - the group members will work on identifying and expressing feelings.

first goal - to get each member to talk, to be aware of the differences between statements of fact and

Figure 6

Conceptual Model:

A Developmental Self-Concept Approach

Approaches	PHASE I (Phenomenological)	PHASE II (Analytical)	PHASE III (Behavioristic)
Individual Goals	Identify and express feelings	Investigate and validate causes for feelings	Take responsibility for feelings make decisions
Developmental Self-Concept Process		Very Influential People Parents Teachers Siblings Peers	Re-educative Process Consolidation Follow-up
Sessions	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10 11 12
Group Progress	**Testing** Competing for position	**Trusting** Relating, accepting, sharing	**Working Through** Discussing, analyzing, considering alternatives	**Terminating** Summarizing and planning

statements of feelings, and to express feelings about themselves.

second goal - to have each member identify a major concern to deal with at this time. *This major concern will be the vehicle for going through the process and will serve as a practice run for learning about problem-solving and decision-making.*

When a major concern has been identified for at least six of the eight group members, it is time to move on.

Phase II - the group members will talk about incidents in their lives that may have had an influence on the way they feel about their concerns.

first goal - the counselor should make the members be as specific as possible about the incidents, relate their feelings associated with the incidents, and then question to determine whether or not the incident could have had a different interpretation.

second goal - the counselor will try to point out that there is the possibility that the cause(s) for members' concerns may not have been as negative as they had perceived. Once the possibility has been established

that the causes of the concerns as perceived by the members may be invalid, the group can then move into the next phase.

Phase III - the group members will work on changing behavior and attitudes.

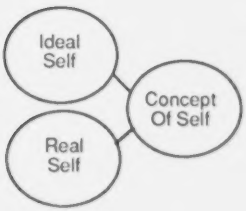
first goal - have the members come up with suggestions for change, have each make decisions about his/her behavior and have them experience the effects of the new behavior.

second goal - to get the group members ready to terminate the process by taking responsibility for the behaviors they plan to change and those they will not change.

Getting Started

Session 1 - To begin this first session, put the **Developmental Self-Concept Model: Phase I** on the chalkboard or pass out a copy of the model and call attention to Phase I.

Explain the process by saying: "This is what we are going to be doing for the next 12 (or whatever number of sessions you have chosen) weeks.



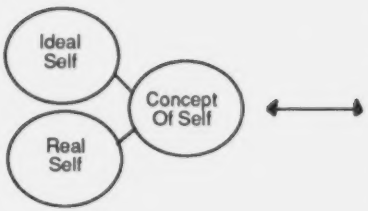
"We are going to be talking about our self-concepts:

the way we feel about ourselves
the way we would like to be
the way we feel we are

"All of us have feelings about ourselves, some we like, others we would like to change. ***If the way we are is very different from the way we would like to be, we have a major concern.*** We are going to learn how to become the way we would like to be.

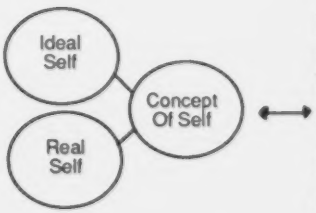
"These feelings of ours have been learned from the way we've been treated by the influential people in our lives, or the way we thought they treated us. We'll talk about some of these incidents." Then put Phase II on the board, or call attention to Phase II on the handout.

Process Overview



Very Influential <u>People:</u>
Parents
Teachers
Siblings
Peers

"Once we understand why we feel and act as we do, we can then decide whether or not we would like to change. If our choice is to make changes, we will help each other find ways of changing. *Because we will see that we can change if we choose to, when we have other problems in our lives we will be able to solve them in the same way.* In other words, we will re-educate ourselves. (Point to Phase III.)



Very Influential <u>People:</u>
Parents
Teachers
Siblings
Peers

<u>The Re-educative Process</u>

"Are there any questions about the model?" Generally there are not, but the group members may raise questions about the process, including the length of each session, how many sessions will be held, quitting the group and confidentiality. After the questions and answers, say: "OK, let's begin by making our circle, and move in close to each other." (The tighter the circle, the more intense the process. Each person feels involved, and will find it difficult to withdraw from the process.)

Counselor: "Now there are three major rules.

1. **We are going to try to keep everything we say here in the group confidential.** That means that you can tell others what <u>you</u> say, but you cannot tell others outside of this group anything anyone else says. What people say is theirs and you have no right to tell others. There are two exceptions. If you are going to hurt yourself or others, or if any laws are broken, I must report the incident to the proper authorities.

2. **We are not going to hurt each other. We are here to help each other. We will not hurt each other, neither in words nor in actions.**

3. **We are all expected to take part in the process.**

"Any questions before we begin?"

It is a good procedure to tape record each group counseling session. Place the recorder on the floor or a low table in the middle of the group. Group members will often ask, "If we are keeping everything confidential, why the tape recorder?" The answer is, "I like to tape record all of my sessions so I can learn what I am doing right or wrong. It is my way of checking up on myself. I will not play the tape for anyone without getting your permission first." The question may then be, "Can we hear the tape?" The answer is, "Yes, I'll play today's tape for you next week." (When the tape is played, the group members will not spend a long time listening to it. To listen to a tape recording is boring once you have had the novelty of hearing your own voice.)

To now move the first session forward say, "Let's begin by sharing something about ourselves with the group. Why doesn't someone start by telling us what kind of person you are. Who would like to begin?"

At this point either ask for the members to volunteer to speak, which allows the members to speak when they feel comfortable, or start with the person to your left or right. This results in the other members feeling pressure as they anticipate their turn, but it also gives them the chance to rehearse what they will say.

Try to get all members to tell something about themselves so they can hear their voices in the group, and try to keep each member's response to a few sentences.

If the members start to tell what they like instead of what they are like, you can let that continue. It gives them the opportunity to test the group and "get their feet wet" slowly. After the group members have stated what they like, it is always possible to redirect the question to ask what kind of person they feel they are.

If someone in the group finds it difficult to talk, say, "That's OK, we'll get back to you later," and go on to the next person.

At this point in the process, counselor responses, generally, should be "reflection of content" or "question-

ing". Be careful about reflecting feelings so as not to frighten the members. Reflecting content and questioning for clarification demonstrates to the members the counselor's interest in listening carefully and understanding what they are saying, and, at the same time, it is not threatening.

After all group members have spoken, ask if there are some other things they would like to share about themselves .

If the group stalls, some useful questions are:

"What are some of your fantasies?"

"What are some of the problems you have here at school?"

"Do you have any problems at home?"

"What do you want to do when you leave school?"

"If you had three wishes, what would they be?"

Questions such as these will help the group process move. Another option involves referring to the Model and asking, "How do you feel you are compared to how you would like to be?"

The first session and part of the second is a testing period. The members are trying to find out if they are like other members in the group, or if they are different. Also, they are trying to discover if the counselor is trustworthy, understanding, supportive, accepting and in charge. *The early sessions are important for establishing rapport between members and the counselor.*

Encourage interaction between members but do not force it during these early sessions. This will come as the members feel more comfortable with each other. Point out similarities between members as the group counseling process progresses. The more alike members feel, the more cohesive the group will become and the more interaction there will be. Another technique for encouraging interaction is to look down and not make eye contact with the speaker. This will force the speaker to make eye contact with other group members.

As the members begin to share feelings and situations with each other, try to find common feelings that most members are experiencing: fear, anxiety, inadequacy, loneliness or anger. *These common feelings will be the vehicles to move the process.*

For example:

Counselor: "A lot of us seem to be concerned about the future. I wonder why we feel that way."
Or, "Some of us seem to be pretty angry. I wonder why we feel that way. John, why do you think you get angry?"

The counselor should reinforce these concerns because they will be coming up again later in the process.

Counselor: "You're saying, John, you get angry when someone puts you down and makes you feel inadequate. How about the rest of you? What makes you angry?"

Bill: "I get angry when someone tells me to do something I don't want to do."
Counselor: "Bill, you get angry when someone tries to control you. Does anyone else feel this way?"

The first three or four-sessions should allow the members to:

hear their voices as part of the group
talk about situations in which they have been involved
learn that everyone has feelings about

everything that happens to them
begin to get specific about facts and feelings
realize that all people are more alike than different
understand that there are driving concerns which affect much of our behavior, including those concerns one has about oneself.

The counselor's goal is two-fold:

to see the members the way they see themselves
to identify a specific concern for each of the members.

There may be more than one concern for most members, but the counselor listens for the concern that is common to most of the members to serve as the vehicle for the process. This is not as difficult as one would suspect. People are more alike than different. For example, people tend to have feelings of insecurity, fear and anger, as well as a wish to be unconditionally liked. These concerns may vary in intensity, but they are there for most people. The way people feel about these con-

cerns and their intensity is related to the way people feel they have been treated by the influential people in their lives.

A note of caution: during Phase I, the members will talk about the influential people in their lives in an effort to place the blame for their problems on them. The counselor's response should be to the situation, not the person who is to be blamed. The discussion of the person to be blamed should be "saved" until the group has moved to Phase II.

For example:

John: "I'm afraid to do things because my parents are always yelling at me and are very critical."

Counselor: "Why would being yelled at make you afraid to do things?" Or, "What kinds of things are you afraid of?" Are others of you in the group afraid to do things?"

At about the fourth or fifth session when the counselor believes that one or two major concerns have been identified to which all or most of the members can relate, it is time to move to Phase II. If you are ready to move to Phase II, say, "John is saying that his parents' yelling has

made him afraid to do things. How about the rest of you? How does the way your parents act affect the way you do things?"

In Phase II the counselor encourages the group members to talk about incidents or experiences they had growing up that may have had an influence on the way they feel about themselves. Generally, these experiences will be negative to justify the negative feelings they have about themselves. At first the counselor accepts these experiences the way the members relate them, as if they were correctly perceived. *As the members get into relating these negative experiences, which tend to put the blame on others for the members' own negative feelings, the counselor begins to insert the possibility that these incidents could be perceived differently.*

For example:

Counselor: "John, you feel your father always criticized you. What are some of the other possible reasons that John's father would have criticized him, group?"

Mary: "Is it possible that your father was trying to teach you a better way?"

Bill: "Maybe your father was having a bad day."

Another example:

Counselor: "Mary, you say your mother never said she loved you. Did she do things that might have demonstrated that she did care a great deal for you?"

Another exmple:

Bill: "I feel my father preferred my brother to me."

Counselor: "What makes you feel that way?"

Jim: "Did you ever tell your father you were jealous of your brother?"

Mary: "Did you punish your brother because you felt your father preferred him? Maybe your father felt he had to protect your brother."

The goal of the counselor in this phase is to cause confusion about the past so the members find it just as easy, if not easier, to choose more acceptable behavior. The counselor can now begin to imply that, regardless of what happened in the past, the future is in the hands of the members. They can choose how they want to behave. They can, if they want, test their perceptions in the group without fear of losing control. They become aware that they have the power to make choices about themselves.

During Phase III the group can, for example, role play solutions to problems or practice behavior changes, confrontations or ways to be assertive. Discussing a situation before trying it and knowing the group will be available to talk about the results gives the members a feeling of support and encouragement. As the members transfer these learnings to the outside world, they know at least for a few sessions that they can come back to the group for support or confirmation or analysis.

The counselor should firmly, consistently and repeatedly reinforce those suggestions from the group that are effective. The counselor should also tie together the process of identifying a concern, realizing that the past had an influence on the concern and choosing a more appropriate form of behavior or attitude as a constructive solution.

From the ninth session on (or at least four sessions before the end of the group counseling process), each session should begin by saying, "This is our (blank) session and we have (blank) sessions left. We have to begin terminating the group, so let's start tying things up. What are we doing about some of our concerns? How are we going to act or feel after the group is over?"

It is important for the counselor to be aware of any open sores that have not been closed. Each member should feel that he/she is no worse off after the group experience than before group counseling. Instead, they are much better. Have the members talk about what they have learned about themselves, the process of problem-solving and how they will handle concerns in the future. Be sure that each member has a defense system still in place. For example:

Counselor: "John, you still feel your stepfather doesn't like you, even though you have tried all the things we have suggested. Group, what other things can John do?"

Mary: "John should be as good as he can be for himself."

Jim: "Maybe he could have a closer relationship with his uncle."

Bill: "It's not John's fault; we think he's a very nice person."

The Conceptual Model provides the process to steer the group to a new awareness. Change is presented in a positive and desirable light. Helping members close the gap between the Ideal Self and the Real

Self will enable them to feel more in control of their lives. At the same time, teaching them this process gives them a guideline to handle future difficulties. Group members, generally, emerge from the experience with renewed conviction in their own capabilities.

Chapter 7

Possible Problem Situations and Ways to Handle Them

[A problem is] an opportunity in work clothes.
Henry J Kaiser, Jr.

Breaking Confidentiality. If a member breaks confidentiality, the counselor, who has the final decision to make about how to handle this situation, can first ask the group for suggestions on how to address the violation of confidentiality. If the member's act was inadvertent, the counselor's goal should be to have the group agree to give him/her another chance. Here the group can be taught to be considerate, compassionate and to act constructively for the benefit of the member. This should be as nondirective as possible. For example:

Tom: "John told some guys about what we talked about last week."

Counselor: "It seems that John told some others about the things we talked about in the group last week. You feel he broke confidentiality. What should we do about the situation?"

Bill: "I think we should throw John out of the group."

Susan: "Maybe we should make him miss the next three sessions."

Ed: "Let's beat him up."

Counselor: "Well, we're here to help each other. How does it help John if we do some of the things you're suggesting?"

Dave: "Maybe John could apologize to the group and promise not to do it again."

Counselor: "Would that satisfy the group?"

If the violation of confidentiality was an intentional act, the member's reasons for doing so should be explored in individual counseling and the member encouraged to discuss them in the group. He/she should then be reminded of the need for confidentiality and informed that another violation may result in removal from the group.

Neurotic Pairing. *Neurotic pairing is when two group members side together to control the group either passively or actively.* They may actively control the group by interrupting others, monopolizing the discussion or demanding that the group behave the way they want it to behave. Passive control of the group is demonstrated by whispering while someone is talking, making faces to put down the person who is talking or taking sides against the other group members.

There are several ways the counselor may control this situation:

1. Sit between the two members who are attempting to take control of the group.
2. Ask the group how they feel about the way the two are acting.
3. Confront the offending group members.
    a. Ask them to tell the group what they are whispering about.
    b. Ask what they did not like about what was being said.
    c. Ask why they have chosen the point of view they are taking.

Aggressiveness. *Aggressive behavior by a*

group member should be dealt with immediately. Here, again, the group should be involved with the process.

The group members should be asked to tell what they think is happening and to identify the feelings involved with the aggressor and the person(s) receiving the aggressive behavior.

The counselor should also confront the aggressor to determine why he/she is being aggressive. In addition, the counselor should ask the person(s) being attacked to tell how they are feeling when situations like this happen to them. For example:

Joan: "Bill is stupid; he's ignorant. He's such a jerk."

Counselor: "Joan, why are you so angry at Bill? What do you want to happen?"

Joan: "He's acting like a baby, always whining, always wanting people to feel sorry for him."

Counselor: "Bill, how did it make you feel when Joan said what she did?"

Bill: "It made me mad. Who does she think she is? She's no better."

Counselor: "Group, what do you think is happen-

ing between Joan and Bill? Was there a better way of dealing with the problem? Could Joan have said it differently so Bill wouldn't get defensive or feel so hurt?"

Boredom. If the group seems to be burning out, finding it difficult to talk or seems bored with the process, the problem could be:

1. The counselor has become lost in the group counseling process.
2. The counselor has not been participating enough with techniques that give direction to the process.
3. The members are feeling threatened, either by a member of the group or the counselor.

If the counselor is lost or is not participating enough with techniques that give direction to the group, the counselor can review where the group is in the process and go back to a point where the members can get back on track. Start the process again by going back to the beginning of the phase the group is in, either Phase I or Phase II, and actively facilitate the discussion. If the counselor feels the members may be threatened, con-

front the problem. For example:

Counselor: "Are we having trouble talking about our feelings because we are afraid of what someone may think? Am I scaring you?"

Group: "No, we feel comfortable with you."

Counselor: "Is there someone in the group you are afraid of? If so, let's discuss the kinds of things that could happen without naming names. John, what are you afraid may happen if you talk about yourself? How about the rest of you?"

The Goat. If there is someone in the group who other members pick on, the goat, treat the problem the same way you would the aggressor. Ask the group members to describe what they think is happening and to identify the feelings experienced by those picking on the person and the feelings of the member being picked on. Those picking on the person should then be asked to explain why they are doing so. The person being picked on, the goat, should also describe how he/she feels in situations like these.

Monopolizer or Attention Seeker. If there is a group member who tends to monopolize the discussions

or is continually doing things to get attention, ask that person to sit on your right. When the disrupting behavior is exhibited, place your hand on the person's shoulder or touch him/her as a signal to stop. Do this gently and without a reprimand. The counselor's touch should not be obvious to the group; don't embarrass the member any more than is necessary.

If the behavior persists, ask the group members to tell how they feel when the person continues the behavior. Ask them for suggestions about how to help the member change the behavior. It can also be helpful to ask the member why he/she continues the behavior that the group feels is disruptive.

Resistant Member. This is a person who has a great deal of difficulty self-disclosing. There are four possible reasons why some people have this difficulty: the member, the referral source, the leader, others in the group.

The member may feel, "I cannot self-disclose because:

I may prove that I am sick.
I may be institutionalized.
I cannot be helped.

no one will understand my problem.
I will be unique.
I cannot trust anyone.
I may hurt others."

"The person or persons who referred me think:
I'm sick.
I should be punished.
I need to be controlled."

"The leader will:
think I'm sick.
not understand me.
try to control me.
involve others I care about.
think less of me.
bring up my past.
know too much about me."

"Others in the group will:
think less of me.
make fun of me.
tell others about me.
think I am different."

The resistant member will find ways of resisting the counseling process. He or she will:
refuse to personalize, using "you" or "we" rather than "I."
talk about others, not self.
exaggerate, qualify and/or generalize.

change the subject.
blame others.
come late to sessions.

Dealing With The Resistant Member. Because we do not know where the major threat to the member is coming from - the process, the counselor, the group or others - it is important to let the member investigate his or her feelings in a non-threatening environment.

It is best to generalize the problem and have the group deal with *"Why a person might have difficulty sharing personal feelings."* Each person should be given the opportunity to discuss why they might be hesitant to discuss personal and private feelings in the group. Each person should also be encouraged to talk about what would make them feel more comfortable.

To help the resistant member and others in the group, the counselor should re-emphasize:

the process and goals.
confidentiality.
the common concerns of the group.
the positive goals of the process.
the choices members have:
    to leave the group.
    to question others.
    to choose not to talk.
rules and limits of the group.
the supportive role of the leader and the group members.

the fact that the success of the group requires each person to help others, not hurt.

Regardless of the problem, it is the counselor's responsibility to control the group and to insure that the process moves along. When things begin to get out of hand, it is advisable to return to the part of the process before the problems occurred, and bring the group along from there. If a particular member is consistently a problem, dismissal from the group and individual counseling should be considered.

Chapter 8

Establishing a Group Counseling Program In a Junior High/Middle or Secondary School

There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other is wings.

Hodding Carter

The goal of group counseling is to enable the members of the group to better cope with the problems that life has imposed, while at the same time, to supply them with tools to face the future with confidence in themselves. Up to this point, the discussion has centered on the process of group counseling. Now attention is turned to creating a workable and successful program in the junior high or secondary school environment. An organized and well-thought-out program benefits all concerned.

Group Counseling

Establishing a group counseling program requires planning. The following areas need to be considered:

Number of groups
Types of groups
Scheduling
Space and physical requirements
Length and number of sessions
Support

Number of Groups. The number of groups conducted by the counselor should be determined by the counselor's skill, available time and the needs of the students. A counselor's schedule might include one or two group counseling sessions and one or two group guidance sessions per day.

Generally, a counselor can have three units of group counseling with 12 sessions each in a school year. The 12-week schedule lends itself to having a unit from September to Christmas, January to the spring break and from the spring break to the end of the year. *The value of the 12-week schedule is that it does allow enough time to complete the process and the counselor the opportunity to decide whether to continue the group.*

Types of Groups. Group counseling may make use of either open or closed group membership.

Open groups are those where members may join or leave the group at will throughout the duration of the group counseling sessions.

Closed groups generally maintain the same membership from the first to last session of counseling.

The process described in this book assumes a closed group, that is the same membership throughout the group counseling process.

Groups will be either *problem-centered*, focusing on such difficulties as underachievement, children of single parents, acting-out students or children of alcoholics, or be *member-centered,* focusing on individual problems related to the self-concept. Whether the group is problem-centered or member-centered, the process is basically the same.

If the plan is to do problem-centered group counseling, choose the potential group members from student records with input from the teachers. The counselor should ask these students to come to an orientation

session, make a presentation to them about group counseling and give them the opportunity to *volunteer* to be group members.

If the group is to consist of *non-volunteer* members, have the orientation about group counseling and clearly spell out the consequences of not attending. Some of these may be reporting the absences to the principal, being expelled from the group (a consequence that is more effective after the group members have achieved a level of cohesiveness) or detention.

Scheduling. Each group should be scheduled for one period a day, one day a week. Try to avoid missing sessions and try to schedule the sessions around holidays or vacations. Any change from the prescribed schedule tends to cause the group to lose its momentum and makes it difficult to build continuity.

Occasionally, a counselor may have a problem with scheduling. If so, a variable schedule is a possibility. Here the group counseling period will vary each week on a rotating basis. For example, if the group meets on Mondays, it would meet first period for the first session, second session would be the second period, and so on.

A variable schedule makes certain that in the 12-week period a student will miss a certain class twice for group counseling.

Other possibilities include meeting the group at the same period but on a different day each week, or rotating periods and rotating days. For example, meeting the group at first period on Monday, at the second period on Tuesday, the third period on Wednesday, fourth period on Thursday, fifth period on Friday, and then continue the sequence on Monday with the sixth period and so on throughout the week.

Space and Physical Requirements. Group counseling requires a private room at least 12 feet by 12 feet in size with nine hard back chairs arranged in a circle. The chairs should be close together to make the circle as small as possible; this will keep all members focused on the group topic. It will also make it obvious when a member is trying to withdraw from the group. In addition, a close-knit circle discourages students from getting up to walk around and disrupting the group.

If the group is meeting in a classroom, have the circle in a corner. The more outer-space control the

counselor has, the better.

Interruptions, including telephone calls, should not be permitted during a session.

It is sometimes helpful to have a chalkboard available during the sessions to diagram where the group is in the process of group counseling.

A tape recorder should be used to record all sessions. Place it on the floor or on a low table in the center of the group, close to the members. The purpose of the tape recording is to serve as a monitor for the counselor.

Length and Number of Sessions. Sessions will be as long as the typical school period, 45 or 50 minutes.

The number of sessions for each group may be 12, but could be 15, depending on the purpose of each group and how the group counseling progresses. A 12- to 15-week schedule fits the typical length of a school semester. The number of sessions could be extended if the counselor feels that the process has not been completed and the students are highly motivated.

Getting Support. *The more people who know about the group counseling program, the more support the program will have.*

The higher the administrative level of support, the greater the support from lower levels.

The more information provided an individual, the better the chance for support.

The more help requested from people, the more people will identify with the program and support it.

The more positive the approach, the more likely people will willingly offer support.

The four main groups of people from whom support for the group counseling program is important are the building administrator, the staff, the students and the parents. Ways to gain this support are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Gaining Support for a Group Counseling Program in Your School

Sow a thought, reap an act;
Sow an act, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny.
Anonymous

To have a successful group counseling program in schools, it is necessary to have the support of the:

building administrator
staff
students
parents

The best way to gain support is to **give a presentation explaining the values, goals and the process of group counseling.** By answering their questions and

asking for their cooperation, you give all segments of the school community a "piece of the action."

Your presentation to each of the groups should be simple, concise, logical and sequential. **You must assume that the person or group to whom you are speaking is not familiar with the group counseling process or techniques**. Most people mistakenly think that group counseling is group therapy, a discussion group or a support group; this misconception should be corrected.

Your presentation should emphasize that **group counseling is an educational process that has a beginning and an end with specific procedures, techniques and goals.** The following presentation is suggested to introduce the group counseling process and its benefits. It is included as a guideline.

Introductory Statement. Whether you are presenting to administrators, staff, students or parents, to begin your presentation you might say:

"We would like to start a group counseling program here at school. Group counseling is a process where we work with eight students in a group. The

overall goal is to help the students:
understand themselves
understand why they behave as they do and
decide if they want to change.

"It is a way of teaching students to make decisions about themselves. In the group,
we talk about the students' concerns,
help them understand why they have those concerns and
what they should or could do to resolve them.

"Some of the values of group counseling are:
I'll be able to work with more students in the same amount of time.
I'll get to know more of my students better.
I'll be teaching a process of problem solving.
I'll have the power of peer pressure on my side.
As a group, we'll have seven or eight other people helping to solve each problem.

"Our goals will be to help students:
feel better about themselves,
learn a problem-solving process and
base decisions on appropriate

information.

"The process of group counseling has three major phases:

the self-concept phase,
the influential people phase,
the re-education phase.

"In the self-concept phase, I will help the students to understand that the concerns they have are related to the conflict between how they see themselves and how they would like to see themselves. They will learn in the influential people phase that their attitudes and feelings have been learned from their interpretation of past events in their lives and are not necessarily based on facts. Once we establish that the students may have been operating on misperceptions, they enter the re-educative phase where they will learn that they can choose the way they would like to be.

"We could start the program with those students the teachers feel need help. We can work with students who have behavior problems, those who have difficulty getting along with others or those who have good ability but who are having difficulty doing well in school."

Group Counseling

"The group discussions will be kept as confidential as possible. Students will not be allowed to hurt themselves or others in the group, nor can they violate school policy or the law.

"Teachers will be informed of any constructive information that we get from the students pertaining to a teacher's class. **General information** will be available to teachers whenever requested.

"Although group discussions are confidential, we will periodically share **general information** with parents or teachers that might be helpful in dealing with their children at home or in school."

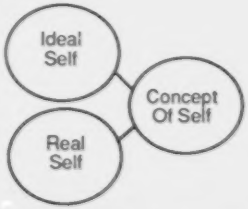
*Note: Feel free to delete any paragraphs you think are not needed for the group you are addressing and to add any content you believe is needed for additional clarification. Be careful not to provide too much information or to give more information than is needed to satisfy your audience. It is better to clarify by answering questions than to give all the information at one time.

Presentation. When making your presentation to each of these groups, give a copy of the Conceptual

Model, as discussed in Chapter 3, and the Developmental Self-Concept Process (see Appendix 1 &2) to each member of your audience. Put the Model on the chalkboard as you explain the process. The chalkboard is helpful to the presentation because it creates a more sequential flow of information that is easier to follow.

If you can use a chalkboard, you presentation could be as follows:

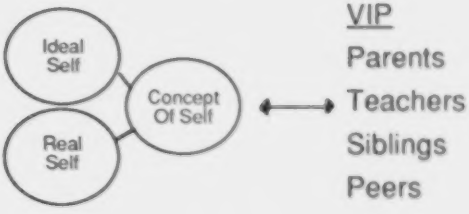
Say, "**We all have a self-concept, which is the way we see ourselves. This self-concept has two major parts, the Ideal Self and the Real Self, or the way we would like to be and the way we feel we are.**" The model looks like this:



Then write VIP on the chalkboard, which stands for "Very Influential People," and draw an arrow to the Self Concept. Follow that by saying, "**We were not born with this self-concept. We were taught to feel the way we do about ourselves. The people who taught**

us to feel this way are the very influential people in our lives, including our parents, teachers, siblings and peers."

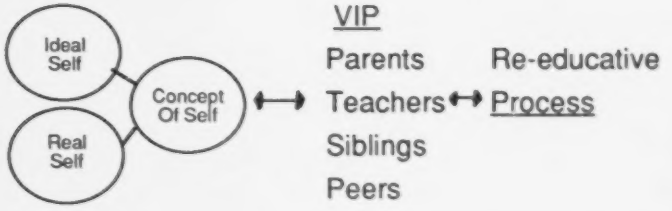
Here, add "VIP" with "Parents, Teachers, Siblings, Peers" under it so the drawing looks like this:



Now say, "Counseling is a way of identifying how we feel about ourselves, including the way we would like to be and the way we feel we are, and investigating the influences that gave rise to these feelings. It also enables us to restructure these feelings so that the negative feelings can be better understood or validated, leading to improved decisions about how we will deal with things in the future.

"This restructuring process takes place in the third phase of the model, the re-educative phase. Here we try out new ways of acting based on a positive concept of

self." At this point, add the words "Re-educative Process" to the chalkboard model so it now looks like this:



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Now write the numbers one through 12 under the model to show that this is a process with a beginning and an end. Refer to the handouts; **point out the stages the group will go through**, including Testing, Trusting, Sharing, Working Through, Consolidation and Follow-up.

In the course of the program, members of the group will learn to:

identify and express feelings,
investigate and validate causes,
take responsibility,
make decisions,
and learn new behavior.

Building Administrator. Your first goal should be to gain the support of the building administrator. An outline of your presentation is:

I. The values of group counseling
   A. Economical
   B. A more natural environment
   C. Group support
   D. The use of peer pressure

II. The goals of group counseling
   A. To improve self-concept
   B. To teach a problem-solving process
   C. To teach appropriate decision-making

III. The group counseling process
   A. Learning about the self
      1. the way we would like to be
      2. the way we feel we are
      3. dealing with the conflict
   B. Learning why we have conflicts
      1. where conflicts come from
      2. are conflicts real?
   C. Learning how to make changes in our attitudes and behavior

IV. Stages the group will go through
   A. Testing
   B. Trusting

C. Sharing
D. Working Through
E. Consolidation and Termination

V. Stages each member of the group will go through
A. Identify and express feelings
B. Investigate and validate causes for feelings
C. Take responsibility for feelings
D. Make decisions about choices for change
E. Learn new behavior

Your administrator may ask certain questions, including the following:

Question: "How will you select your members?"

Answer: "The group will either be problem-centered (underachievers, children of single parents, acting-out students or children of alcoholics, for example) or member-centered (individual problems related to the self-concept and how the members feel about themselves). Hopefully, the teachers will refer the students for the

group or they will volunteer."

Question: "How many students will be in each group?"
Answer: "Eight."

Question: "Will the students be taken out of class?"
Answer: "Yes, if the group is problem-centered. No, if the group is member-centered. These students will probably be taken out of study hall. However, if it is necessary for students to be taken out of class, the schedule can be rotating so that a student misses a class only once or twice. For example, Monday first period, Tuesday second period, and so on, or the first week the first period, the second week the second period, the third week the third period, and so on."

Question: "Should we get parents' permission?"
Answer: "We could by sending a letter home that states:
'Your child has been selected to take part in a group counseling program to (improve self-concept, school achievement, or whatever). If you have any concerns about the program or your child's

participation, please let me know. Call me at (telephone #).'

"We could invite parents in for a meeting to discuss the program."

Question: "What do you want from me?"
Answer: "Provide time during a staff meeting so I can explain the program to the teachers and ask for their help and cooperation."

Staff Meeting. At the staff meeting, give each person a copy of the Conceptual Model and put it on the chalkboard as you make the presentation.

Describe group counseling
Values
Goals
Process
Stages

Use the outline presented to the administrator.

Possible questions the teachers may ask include:

Question: "Will you be doing group therapy?"

Answer: "No. We will be dealing only with material the students bring to the group. There will be no interpretations and we will only be dealing with conscious material. These students are normal students who may be having problems adjusting."

Question: "Will you share information with us?"
Answer: "Yes. I will periodically meet with you to share general information about the students and their problems as they relate to school. I will not be able to share specific information about particular students because confidentiality is an important part of the process."

Question: "Will information discussed in the group about teachers be passed on to the administration?"
Answer: "No."

Question: "What changes should we look for in the students as a result of this program?"
Answer: "Students should take on a more positive

attitude towards school and problems in general."

Question: "Can we sit in on some of the meetings?"
Answer: "Maybe. It depends on how cohesive the group is. I would like it if you did, but I will need to have the approval of the students before I can approve it."

Students. After the administrator and teachers have been told about group counseling, the students should be informed and given the opportunity to volunteer for the program. If you plan to do member-centered group counseling (a process for helping students better understand why they act as they do and make changes if they choose to), ask the teachers of each English class on a particular grade level for fifteen minutes of class time to explain the group counseling program and ask for student volunteers.

During the classroom presentation, put the Developmental Self-Concept Process portion of the Conceptual Model on the chalkboard (seeAppendix 1) and describe for the students the goals of group counseling and

the group counseling process.

After the students have had a chance to raise questions, invite those students interested in joining a group to put their names on a sheet of paper passed around the room.

Questions the students may ask include:

Question: "What will we talk about?"
Answer: "We will talk about those things that bother us and keep us from doing as well as we would like, both in and out of school."

Question: "Will other people know what we talk about in the group?"
Answer: "No. We will try to keep everything we talk about in the group confidential. You can tell whomever you choose what you say in the group, but you cannot tell what someone else in the group has said."

Question: "Will we miss class?"
Answer: "Yes or no if from study hall."

Question: "Can we quit the group whenever we want?"

Answer: "Yes, but I would hope that you stay long enough to give the process and the group a fair chance."

Parents. A letter should be sent to the parents of those students who volunteer to take part in the group counseling program. It might say:

> "We are starting a group counseling program in school. Your son or daughter has indicated an interest in this program. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the values and goals of this program. I have scheduled a meeting in the cafeteria on (date and time). Please do attend.
> P.S. If you cannot attend and have questions about the program, please give me a call at (telephone #)."

During the meeting with the parents, again hand out the Model and talk about group counseling:

Values
Goals
Process
Stages

After the parents have raised questions, ask those parents who want their children to be included in the program to sign a paper indicating their approval.

Questions parents may ask include:

Question: "Will the students be talking about personal family problems?"

Answer: "Maybe, if these problems are of concern to them. The goal of the group would be to help students understand their problems well enough to make appropriate decisions."

Question: "Can you guarantee confidentiality?"

Answer: "No, but we will point out the importance of confidentiality."

Question: "Will the problems of other students affect my child in a negative way?"

Answer: "It is the responsibility of the counselor to keep the effects of the process positive. The whole orientation of the group is to make positive changes, not to encourage negative behavior."

Gaining Support in Your School

Setting up a group counseling program requires the support of administrators, teachers, students and parents. This support is gained by addressing each group and winning their support through an explanation of the process and answering any questions that they may have concerning how the process will affect them. Putting their concerns to rest will enable the program to get off to a good start.

Chapter 10

Accountability: Assessment and Evaluation

I shall tell you a great secret, my friend. Do not wait for the last judgment. It takes place every day.

Albert Camus

Once a group counseling program is underway, it is essential to maintain the support of administrators, teachers, students and parents. *Accountability, as demonstrated through assessment and evaluation of the program, keeps everyone informed, and, at the same time, builds confidence in the on-going process.*

Building Administrators. Administrators are most concerned about students who underachieve and misbehave in school. Therefore, information about the success of the group counseling program that addresses

these concerns should be collected for their review.

These include:

1. Improvements in grade point averages.
2. Positive trends in grade improvement.
3. Lessening of absences and tardiness.
4. Fewer disciplinary actions by teachers.
5. Decrease in referrals to the administrative disciplinarian.
6. Summaries of rating scales completed by teachers (e.g. Appendix 4, Student Personal Rating Sheet).
7. Summaries of rating scales completed by parents (e.g. Appendix 3, Parent Questionnaire).
8. Anecdotal reports by teachers of student improvement in behavior and grades.
9. Anecdotal reports by students of the group counseling program's significance.
10. Anecdotal reports by parents of improvements in their children.

Teachers. The support of teachers is also essential for the success of the group counseling program. They, like administrators, are interested in students'

school achievement and behavior.

Some information that may help them see the importance of group counseling as a support for their own efforts includes:

1. Improvements in grade point averages.
2. Positive trends in grade improvement.
3. Lessening of absences and tardiness.
4. Fewer disciplinary actions by teachers.
5. Decrease in referrals to the administrative disciplinarian.
6. Summaries of rating scales completed by teachers (e.g. Appendix 4, Student Personal Rating Sheet).
7. Summaries of rating scales completed by parents (e.g. Appendix 3, Parent Questionnaire).
8. Anecdotal reports by students of the group counseling program's significance.
9. Anecdotal reports by parents of improvements in their children.

Students. The willingness of students to volunteer for and participate in the group counseling program is vital to insure future participation. They tend to be

most troubled by lack of school success, concern over peer acceptance and doubts they have about themselves.

Information useful in helping students see the value of the group counseling program includes:

1. Improvements in grade point averages.
2. Positive trends in grade improvement.
3. Lessening of absences and tardiness.
4. Fewer disciplinary actions by teachers.
5. Decrease in referrals to the administrative disciplinarian.
6. Summaries of rating scales completed by teachers (e.g. Appendix 4, Student Personal Rating Sheet).
7. Anecdotal reports by teachers of student improvement in behavior and grades.
8. Anecdotal reports by students of the group counseling program's significance.
9. Increased numbers of friends.
10. Greater positive feelings about themselves.

Parents. Finally, the support of parents for the group counseling program is of utmost importance. Parents tend to be concerned most about the academic

development of their children and their behavior in school.

Information useful for demonstrating the group counseling program's success to parents includes:

1. Improvements in grade point averages.
2. Positive trends in grade improvement.
3. Lessening of absences and tardiness.
4. Fewer disciplinary actions by teachers.
5. Decrease in referrals to the administrative disciplinarian.
6. Summaries of rating scales completed by teachers (e.g. Appendix 4, Student Personal Rating Sheet).
7. Summaries of rating scales completed by parents (e.g. Appendix 3, Parent Questionnaire).
8. Anecdotal reports by teachers of student improvement in behavior and grades.
9. Anecdotal reports by students of the group counseling program's significance.
10. Anecdotal reports by parents of improvements in their children.

Assessment and accountability data is vital for

building support of the program. Every opportunity should be taken to share the successes of the program with administrators, teachers, students and parents. This can be done through reports and presentations at administrative meetings and presentations for colleagues at professional meetings.

Group counseling is an effective and efficient method of seeing many students in a limited time. It helps students develop a better self image and gives them the tools necessary to handle the problems and difficulties they face in their everyday lives. Gaining the support of the important people in the school is your way of insuring an on-going, successful program.

Suggested Readings

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available by contacting Dr. Benjamin Cohn, Lake Road, Katonah, New York 10536.

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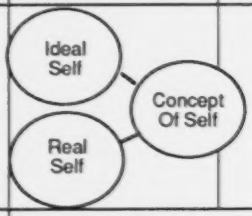
Appendix 1

Conceptual Model:

A Developmental Self-Concept Approach

Approaches	PHASE I (Phenomenological)	PHASE II (Analytical)	PHASE III (Behavioristic)
Individual Goals	Identify and express feelings	Investigate and validate causes for feelings	Take responsibility for feelings make decisions
Developmental Self-Concept Process		Very Influential People Parents Teachers Siblings Peers	Re-educative Process Consolidation Follow-up
Sessions	1 2 3 4	5 6 7	8 9 10 11 12
Group Progress	Testing: Competing for position	Trusting: Relating, accepting, sharing	Working Through: Discussing, analyzing, considering alternatives	Terminating: Summarizing and planning

Developmental Self-Concept Process Model

Process model	Exploration Self-Concept	Analytical Very Important People	Re-education	Consolidation	Follow-up
Flow	Talk about	Think about	Decide about / Learn about / Do about	Review and support about / Plan about	Review and support about
Members	Testing	Trusting and sharing	Working through	Termination	Sharing and supporting
Content	How I Feel about myself	Why I feel as I do	How can I choose?	What have I learned and how can I use it?	What gains have I made?
Sessions	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9 10 11	12 13 14 15	4-6 weeks following termination
Counselor	Identify and Express feelings	Investigate and Validate the causes of these feelings	Take responsibility for behavior and make decisions about changes	Reinforce what members have learned and encourage its use	Reinforce the changes that group members have made

Appendix 3

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Student's name_____

Please indicate any changes you may have noticed in your child by placing a check in the right box:

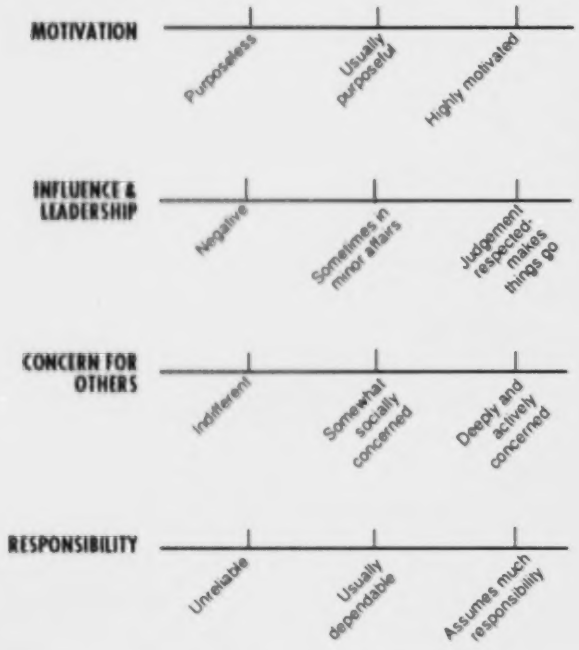
How does child get along with:	Very much better	Much better	Slightly better	Same	Slightly worse	Much worse	Very much worse
1. father							
2. mother							
3. brother(s)							
4. sister(s)							
5. teachers							
6. other adults							
7. boys (not brothers)							
8. girls (not sisters)							
9. in school							
What is your feeling about your child's:							
1. self-confidence							
2. studying							
3. doing chores							
4. doing what is told							
5. talking more							
6. generally keeping out of trouble							

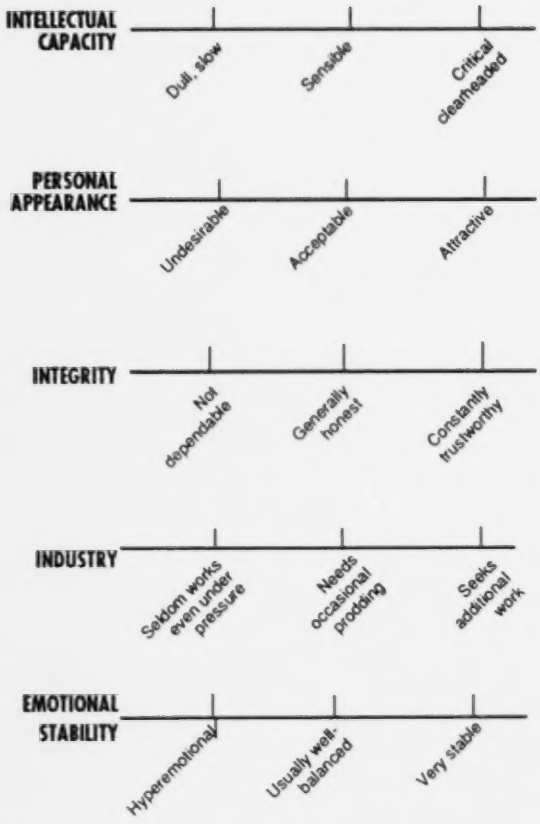
Please describe any changes in your child's attitudes that you might have noticed over the past school year. Feel free to write in any other comment that might help us.

Appendix 4
Personal Rating Sheet

Student_____
Subject_____
Teacher_____
Date_____

Please place a check mark above the point on the scale which best describes the student as you see him/her now. Your mark may be between the vertical lines. We would also appreciate any personal observations you might write on a separate piece of paper.





CHECK ONE:

I have made a written statement on the other side_____.

This side completes my summation of the student_____.

Appendix 5

Guidelines and Assessments

Rate yourself on how well you conduct the following
(NI=Needs Improvement; S=Satisfactory; VW=Very Well):

	Behavioral Characteristic to Respond		
	NI	S	VW
PHASE I			
1. Because it is helpful for the clients to know what the group counseling process involves, the counselor is able to conceptualize the process so the clients understand they will be going through three phases.			
2. The leader does not function as a participant in the group, but assumes the responsibility and authority for maintaining the group process.			
3. In order to establish the leader role, the counselor uses techniques and does not get involved in issues.			
4. The counselor is careful not to demonstrate inappropriate behavior such as telling jokes or stories in order to avoid setting a model for the clients which is not acceptable in the group process.			
5. Given any situation, the leader is able to maintain control of the group.			
6. In the group process, the counselor conveys to the clients that they have a right to their feelings and is able to create an environment where the members feel safe enough to share these feelings verbally.			
7. The counselor recognizes that what the client says is more important than what the counselor says and rarely forces his comments or concerns over those of the clients in the group.			

	NI	S	VW
8. In the group counseling process, the client is allowed to interrupt, but not the counselor.			
9. If simultaneous conversation occurs between the leader and a client, the client is allowed to proceed.			
10. The counselor allows the clients within the group to test their feelings of trust with other members and is aware this process takes time and cannot be rushed.			
11. At all times, the counselor assumes what the students say in the group is, to the best of their knowledge, the truth.			
12. Whenever the leader makes a statement, he or she is always aware that it carries more weight than the same statement made by a group member.			
13. In the first phase of the counseling process, the leader is able to see the client's problem the same way the client sees it.			
14. The leader does not make value judgments.			
15. During the group process, the anxiety level is kept fairly high by the leader.			
16. The counselor is able to relate all discussions, irrespective of the topic, back to the individual's self-concept.			
17. Counselors working with adolescent groups constantly bear in mind that adolescents, by definition, have a poor, or confused or inappropriate self-concept.			
18. The counselor transmits to the students the fact that the farther apart the ideal and the real self-concept are, the more confused the client.			
19. At all times, the counselor directs more concern at the feelings being discussed, and less concern at the facts being presented.			

	NI	S	VW
20. The client is encouraged by the leader to talk about how "he or she" feels rather than be allowed to use the generalized pronoun "we."			
21. In the group counseling process, the leader tends to overlook strong feelings of anger or hurt in the early sessions of the process in order not to scare some of the clients to the point where they will be afraid to share any of their feelings for fear the counselor may know more about them than they do about themselves.			
22. When one client is being attacked by another, the counselor is able to take the focus off the person being attacked and direct it back on the person doing the attacking.			
23. The counselor is quickly able to determine what information presented by the group is inappropriate to deal with at the present time, mentally files the information and discusses it at a later date.			
24. At times, the counselor is able to make comments or suggest alternatives with the intent of "planting seeds" rather than suggesting that the clients take action, and these "seeds" are then brought up later in the process at a more meaningful time.			
25. The counselor is very sensitive to unexpected or equivocal responses which may be indicators of deeper, more complex feelings that should be investigated later			
26. If the group slows down, the counselor reverts back to dealing with how the students feel about each other and does the group have a cohesiveness and trust toward each other.			
27. Given a general statement by a member of the group,the counselor does not accept it at face value, but attempts to force the individual to be more specific in order to determine if the general statement is hiding more important characteristics that are			

	NI	S	VW
bothering the client.			
28. The counselor does not tear down an individual's defenses. The counselor always allows the client some way out.			
29. The leader allows a member not to talk if it does not affect other members. The issue is dealt with openly when the group becomes concerned.			
30. When the counselor notes inconsistencies, inaccurate statements, etc., he assumes the role of asking other clients to respond to the inconsistencies or inaccurate information.			
31. The counselor listens for statements which indicate there is no other alternative, and at this point, asks the group to express other possible solutions.			
32. The counselor, during process, clearly realizes that if he gives support to the group or to a member of the group, he also implies that he has the power to take it away; therefore, the technique of support itself may become a goal for some clients while, for other clients, the fear of losing support produces inhibitions in their ability to operate in the process.			
33. In using the technique of clarification, the counselor is aware that when clarifying 3, 4 or 5 different responses, the group tendency will be to pick up the last statement made.			
34. The counselor employs the technique "reflection of feeling" as a way of summarizing the feeling of what the clients said without adding anything.			
35. To help facilitate openness and urge the group to take a more active part, the counselor tells the group when he has made mistakes, the things he doesn't understand and when he needs help getting the group moving.			

	NI	S	VW
36. The leader uses "reflection of content" primarily in the early stages of the process to keep the group discussion going.			
37. The counselor encourages members of the group to speak to the group rather than to the leader by not allowing the speaker direct eye contact with him or to inform the person speaking to direct his comments to the group.			
38. The counselor uses "affect laden" words that describe feeling as opposed to factual type words.			
39. The leader does not put the client in a position of having to respond to whether the counselor's statements about what the client has said are right or wrong. (Ex.: "You don't seem to like English, is that right?)			
40. The counselor is able to shape the clients' behavior so that the clients support each other.			
41. When an individual indicates anger, the counselor listens carefully and clarifies the situation in an objective manner back to the individual and the group for it to be dealt with constructively.			
42. The counselor discourages a member of the group "playing counselor" which may be an effort of keeping the discussions from ending up on him or her.			
43. The counselor does not allow the process to become a gripe session that ends with individuals feeling depressed, that their life is hopeless, etc., but helps the clients to analyze failure with the attitude that it is only failure if one doesn't learn from it.			
44. The counselor is able to constantly involve other group members to help a client find alternative ways of dealing with the problem.			

	NI	S	VW
45. Inappropriate language is allowed in the group if it is the only way a client can express the way he feels; however, the counselor attempts to teach the individuals to express themselves more appropriately by having them restate their feelings.			
46. The counselor does not assume responsibility for solving problems but rather helps the members understand what they are feeling, why they are feeling this way, and only maintains the responsibility of helping the clients solve their own problems.			
47. The counselor only asks questions when he or she has a purpose.			
48. In terms of processing the model, the leader is always aware of where he is with the group in the process as well as where the individuals are within the group.			
49. Phase I is not left until most of the students have discussed how they feel about themselves because the leader refers to these feelings in Phases II and III.			
PHASE II			
50. The counselor relates to the group members the fact that we are not born with our self-concepts but that we have learned to feel the way we do about ourselves from the important people in our lives.			
51. The leader is aware that what is important in the group counseling process is not so much what the "important person" did to the student but rather how the student perceived what the "important person" did and how that "important person" made him feel.			
52. In Phase II, the counselor's role is to help the individual understand that there may have been other reasons why an important person acted the way he did or other ways of interpreting what actually went on.			

	NI	S	VW
53. The counselor consistently espouses the concept that people react to us because of our behavior, not because of the way we really are.			
54. The leader makes the students aware of their influence on other people, how they can be helpful, destructive or supportive.			
55. The clients are made to feel the important people in their lives did what they felt was best at the time, and the leader points out that the client may have misperceived a situation or motives.			
56. When an individual expresses anger, the leader helps him or her to understand why he or she feels anger and that it might be that he has learned this approach and there may be little basis for it.			
57. During the sessions where anxiety is high and the clients may try to stay away from the working-through period, the counselor is patient, listens carefully, and indicates his interest and involvement, but does not control the clients to the point that he or she forces them to deal with material before they are ready.			
PHASE III 58. At every opportunity, the leader shows the clients that the way they feel has been taught to them, and because it has been taught they can now be retaught and change, if they so choose.			
59. The counselor begins the re-education stage after almost all the clients in the group are able to tie together the way they feel to the way they have been taught to feel by the important people in their lives.			
60. In Phase III, the counselor deals with actual situations and places emphasis on possible solutions or alternative behaviors.			

	NI	S	VW
61. During the group process, the members are exposed to data which allows them to make more realistic decisions during Phase III.			
62. If a client refuses to change a negative perception of himself, the leader asks if he is satisfied being this way in hopes of stimulating him to discuss in more detail the possibility of change.			
63. The leader makes the clients aware that they must assume responsibility for their own behavior.			
64. Generally, clients are locked in because they think there is only one solution; therefore, the counselor demonstrates that this is not the case.			
65. In the counseling process, the realization that how we behave may result from how we misperceived situations in the past gives the clients strength to consider change for tomorrow -- a point which the leader strongly emphasizes.			
66. The counselor believes the group has a greater potential for suggesting solutions than any one individual.			
67. In the re-educative stage, the counselor's major function is to have the group help an individual find alternative ways of behaving to reach his goal.			

The following is reprinted from Ethical Guidelines for the Group Counselor, The Association for Specialists in Group Work, June, 1989.

Ethical Guidelines

1. Orientation and providing Information.: Group counselors adequately prepare prospective or new group members by providing as much information about the existing or proposed group as necessary.

Minimally, information related to each of the following areas should be provided.

(a) Entrance procedures, time parameters of the group experience, group participation expectations, methods of payment (where appropriate), and termination procedures are explained by the group counselor as appropriate to the level of maturity of group members and the nature and purpose(s) of the group.
(b) Group counselors have available for distribution, a professional disclosure statement that includes information on the group counselor's qualifications and group services that can be provided, particularly as related to the nature and purpose(s) of the specific group.
(c) Group counselors communicate the role expectations, rights, and responsibilities of group members and group counselor(s).
(d) The group goals are stated as concisely as possible by the group counselor including "whose" goal it is (the group counselor's, the institution's, the parent's, the law's, society's, etc.) and the role of group members in influencing or determining the group's goal(s).
(e) Group counselors explore with group members the risks of potential life changes that may occur because of the group experience and help members explore their readiness to face these possibilities.
(f) Group members are informed by the group counselor of unusual or experimental procedures that might be expected in their group experience.
(g) Group counselors explain, as realistically as possible, what services can and cannot be provided within the particular group structure offered.
(h) Group counselors emphasize the need to promote full psychological functioning and presence among group members. They inquire from prospective group members whether they are using any kind of drug or medication that may affect functioning in the group. They do not permit any use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs during group sessions and they discourage the use of alcohol and/or drugs (legal or illegal) prior to group meetings which may affect the physical or emotional presence of the member or other group members.

(i) Group counselors inquire from prospective group members whether they have ever been a client in counseling or psychotherapy. If a prospective group member is already in a counseling relationship with another professional person, the group counselor advises the prospective group member to notify the other professional of their participation in the group.
(j) Group counselors clearly inform group members about the policies pertaining to the group counselor's willingness to consult with them between group sessions.
(k) In establishing fees for group counseling services, group counselors consider the financial status and the locality of prospective group members. Group members are not charged fees for group sessions where the group counselor is not present and the policy of charging for sessions missed by a group member is clearly communicated. Fees for participating as a group member are contracted between group counselor and group member for a specified period of time. Group counselors do not increase fees for group counseling services until the existing contracted fee structure has expired. In the event that the established fee structure is inappropriate for a prospective member, group counselors assist in finding comparable services of acceptable cost.

2. *Screening of Members*: The group counselor screens prospective group members (when appropriate to their theoretical orientation). Insofar as possible, the counselor selects group members whose needs and goals are compatible with the goals of the group, who will not impede the group process, and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience. An orientation to the group (i.e., ASGW Ethical Guideline #1 is included during the screening process.)

Screening may be accomplished in one or more ways, such as the following:

(a) Individual interview
(b) Group interview of prospective group members
(c) Interview as part of a team staffing
(d) Completion of a written questionnaire by prospective group members.

3. *Confidentiality*: Group counselors protect members by defining clearly what confidentiality means, why it is important, and the difficulties involved in enforcement.

(a) Group counselors take steps to protect members by defining confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality (i.e., when a group member's condition indicates that

there is clear and imminent danger to the member, others, or physical property, the group counselor takes reasonable personal action and/or informs responsible authorities).
(b) Group counselors stress the importance of confidentiality and set a norm of confidentiality regarding all group participants' disclosures. The importance of maintaining confidentiality is emphasized before the group begins and at various times in the group. The fact that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed is clearly stated.
(c) Members are made aware of the difficulties involved in enforcing and insuring confidentiality in a group setting. The counselor provides examples of how confidentiality can nonmaliciously be broken to increase members' awareness, and helps to lessen the likelihood that this breach of confidence will occur. Group counselors inform group members about the potential consequences of intentionally breaching confidentiality.
(d) Group counselors can only ensure confidentiality on their part and not on the part of the members.
(e) Group counselors video or audio tape a group session only with the prior consent and the members' knowledge of how the tape will be used.
(f) When working with minors, the group counselor specifies the limits of confidentiality.
(g) Participants in a mandatory group are made aware of any reporting procedures required of the group counselor.
(h) Group counselors store or dispose of group member records (written, audio, video, etc.) in ways that maintain confidentiality.
(i) Instructors of group counseling courses maintain the anonymity of group members whenever discussing group counseling cases.

4. *Voluntary/Involuntary Participation*: Group counselors inform members whether participation is voluntary or involuntary.

(a) Group counselors take steps to ensure informed consent procedures in both voluntary and involuntary groups.
(b) When working with minors in a group, counselors are expected to follow the procedures specified by the institution in which they are practicing.
(c) With involuntary groups, every attempt is made to enlist the cooperation of the members and their continuance in the group on a voluntary basis.
(d) Group counselors do not certify that group treatment has been received by members who merely attend sessions but did not meet the defined group expectations. Group members are informed about the consequences for failing to participate in a group.

5. *Leaving a Group*: Provisions are made to assist a group member to terminate in an effective way.

(a) Procedures to be followed for a group member who chooses to exit a group prematurely are discussed by the counselor with all group members either before the group begins, during a pre-screening interview, or during the initial group session.
(b) In case of legally mandated group counseling, group counselors inform members of the possible consequences for premature self termination.
(c) Ideally, both the group counselor and the member can work cooperatively to determine the degree to which a group experience is productive or counterproductive for that individual.
(d) Members ultimately have a right to discontinue membership in a group, at a designated time, if the predetermined trial period proves to be unsatisfactory.
(e) Members have the right to exit a group, but it is important that they be made aware of the importance of informing the counselor and the group members prior to deciding to leave. The counselor discusses the possible risks of leaving the group prematurely with a member who is considering this option.
(f) Before leaving a group, the group counselor encourages members (if appropriate) to discuss their reasons for wanting to discontinue membership in the group. Counselors intervene if other members use undue pressure to force a member to remain in the group.

6. *Coercion and Pressure*: Group counselors protect member rights against physical threats, intimidation, coercion, and undue peer pressure insofar as is reasonably possible.

(a) It is essential to differentiate between "therapeutic pressure" that is part of any group and "undue pressure," which is not therapeutic.
(b) The purpose of a group is to help participants find their own answers, not to pressure them into doing what the group thinks is appropriate.
(c) Counselors exert care not to coerce participants to change in directions which they clearly state they do not choose.
(d) Counselors have a responsibility to intervene when others use undue pressure or attempt to persuade members against their will.
(e) Counselors intervene when any member attempts to act out aggression in a physical way that might harm another member or themselves.

(f) Counselors intervene when a member is verbally abusive or inappropriately confrontative to another member.

7.*Imposing Counselor Values:* Group counselors develop an awareness of their own values and needs and the potential impact they have on the interventions likely to be made.

(a) Although group counselors take care to avoid imposing their values on members, it is appropriate that they expose their own beliefs, decisions, needs, and values, when concealing them would create problems for the members.
(b) There are values implicit in any group, and these are made clear to potential members before they join the group. (Examples of certain values include: expressing feelings, being direct and honest, sharing personal material with others, learning how to trust, improving interpersonal communication, and deciding for oneself.)
(c) Personal and professional needs of group counselors are not met at the members' expense.
(d) Group counselors avoid using the group for their own therapy.
(e) Group counselors are aware of their own values and assumptions and how these apply in a multi-cultural context.
(f) Group counselors take steps to increase their awareness of ways that their personal reactions to members might inhibit the group process and they monitor their countertransference. Through an awareness of the impact of stereotyping and discrimination (i.e., biases based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or sexual preference), group counselors guard the individual rights and personal dignity of all group members.

8. *Equitable Treatment:* Group counselors make every reasonable effort to treat each member individually and equally.

(a) Group counselors recognize and respect differences (e.g., cultural, racial, religious, lifestyle, age, disability, gender) among group members.
(b) Group counselors maintain an awareness of their behavior toward individual group members and are alert to the potential detrimental effects of favoritism or partiality toward any particular group member to the exclusion or detriment of any other member(s). It is likely that group counselors will favor some members over others, yet all group members deserve to be treated equally.

(c) Group counselors ensure equitable use of group time for each member by

inviting silent members to become involved, acknowledging nonverbal attempts to communicate, and discouraging rambling and monopolizing of time by members.
(d) If a large group is planned, counselors consider enlisting another qualified professional to serve as a co-leader for the group sessions.

9. *Dual Relationships:* Group counselors avoid dual relationships with group members that might impair their objectivity and professional judgment, as well as those which are likely to compromise a group member's ability to participate fully in the group.

(a) Group counselors do not misuse their professional role and power as group leader to advance personal or social contacts with members throughout the duration of the group.
(b) Group counselors do not use their professional relationship with group members to further their own interest either during the group or after the termination of the group.
(c) Sexual intimacies between group counselors and members are unethical.
(d) Group counselors do not barter (exchange) professional services with group members for services.
(e) Group counselors do not admit their own family members, relatives, employees, or personal friends as members to their groups.
(f) Group counselors discuss with group members the potential detrimental effects of group members engaging in intimate inter-member relationships outside of the group.
(g) Students who participate in a group as a partial course requirement for a group course are not evaluated for an academic grade based upon their degree of participation as a member in a group. Instructors of group counseling courses take steps to minimize the possible negative impact on students when they participate in a group course by separating course grades from participation in the group and by allowing students to decide what issues to explore and when to stop.
(h) It is inappropriate to solicit members from a class (or institutional affiliation) for one's private counseling or therapeutic groups.

10. *Use of Technique:* Group counselors do not attempt any technique unless trained in its use or under supervision by a counselor familiar with the intervention.

(a) Group counselors are able to articulate a theoretical orientation that guides their

practice, and they are able to provide a rationale for their interventions.
(b) Depending upon the type of an intervention, group counselors have training commensurate with the potential impact of a technique.
(c) Group counselors are aware of the necessity to modify their techniques to fit the unique needs of various cultural and ethnic groups.
(d) Group counselors assist members in translating in-group learnings to daily life.

11. Goal Development: Group counselors make every effort to assist members in developing their personal goals.

(a) Group counselors use their skills to assist members in making their goals specific so that others present in the group will understand the nature of the goals.
(b) Throughout the course of a group, group counselors assist members in assessing the degree to which personal goals are being met, and assist in revising any goals when it is appropriate.
(c) Group counselors help members clarify the degree to which the goals can be met within the context of a particular group.

12. *Consultation:* Group counselors develop and explain policies about between-session consultation to group members.

(a) Group counselors take care to make certain that members do not use between-session consultations to avoid dealing with issues pertaining to the group that would be dealt with best in the group.
(b) Group counselors urge members to bring the issues discussed during between-session consultations into the group if they pertain to the group.
(c) Group counselors seek out consultation and/or supervision regarding ethical concerns or when encountering difficulties which interfere with their effective functioning as group leaders.
(d) Group counselors seek appropriate professional assistance for their own personal problems or conflicts that are likely to impair their professional judgment and work performance.
(e) Group counselors discuss their group cases only for professional consultation and educational purposes.
(f) Group counselors inform members about policies regarding whether consultations will be held confidential.

13. Termination from the Group: Depending upon the purpose of participation in

the group, counselors promote termination of members from the group in the most efficient period of time.

(a) Group counselors maintain a constant awareness of the progress made by each group member and periodically invite the group members to explore and reevaluate their experiences in the group. It is the responsibility of group counselors to help promote the independence of members from the group in a timely manner.

14. Evaluation and Follow-up: Group counselors make every attempt to engage in ongoing assessment and to design follow-up procedures for their groups.

(a) Group counselors recognize the importance of ongoing assessment of a group, and they assist members in evaluating their own progress.
(b) Group counselors conduct evaluation of the total group experience at the final meeting (or before termination), as well as ongoing evaluation.
(c) Group counselors monitor their own behavior and become aware of what they are modeling in the group.
(d) Follow-up procedures might take the form of personal contact, telephone contact, or written contact.
(e) Follow-up meetings might be with individuals, groups, or both to determine the degree to which: (i) members have reached their goals, (ii) the group had a positive or negative effect on the participants, and (iii) members could profit from some type of referral. Information is requested for possible modification of future groups. If there is no follow-up meeting, provisions are made available for individual follow-up meetings to any member who needs or requests such a contact.

15. Referrals: If the needs of a particular member cannot be met within the type of group being offered, the group counselor suggests other appropriate professional referrals.

(a) Group counselors are knowledgeable of local community resources for assisting group members regarding professional referrals .
(b) Group counselors help members seek further professional assistance, if needed.

16. Professional Development: Group counselors recognize that professional growth is a continuous, ongoing, developmental process throughout their career.

(a) Group counselors maintain and upgrade their knowledge and skill competencies through educational activities, clinical experiences, and participation in professional development activities.
(b) Group counselors keep abreast of research findings and new developments as applied to groups.

Safeguarding Ethical Practice and
Procedures for Reporting Unethical Behavior

The preceding remarks have been advanced as guidelines which are generally representative of ethical and professional group practice They have not been proposed as rigidly defined prescriptions. However, practitioners who are thought to be grossly unresponsive to the ethical concerns addressed in this document may be subject to a review of their practices by the AACD Ethics Committee and ASGW peers.

For consultation and/or questions regarding these ASGW Ethical Guidelines or group ethical dilemmas, you may contact the Chairperson of the ASGW Ethics Committee. The name, address, and telephone number of the current ASGW Ethics Committee Chairperson may be acquired by telephoning the AACD office in Alexandria, Virginia at 703/823-9800.

If a group counselor's behavior is suspected as being unethical, the following procedures are to be followed:

(a) Collect more information and investigate further to confirm the unethical practice as determined by the ASGW Ethical Guidelines.
(b) Confront the individual with the apparent violation of ethical guidelines for the purposes of protecting the safety of any clients and to help the group counselor correct any inappropriate behaviors. If satisfactory resolution is not reached through this contact then:
(c) A complaint should be made in writing, including the specific facts and dates of the alleged violation and all relevant supporting data. The complaint should be included in an envelope marked "Confidential" to ensure confidentiality for both the accuser(s) and the alleged violator(s) and forward to all of the following sources:

1. The name and address of the Chairperson of the state Counselor Licensure Board for the respective state, if in existence.

2. The Ethics Committee c/o The President American Association for Counseling and Development, 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22304

3. The name and address of all private credentialing agencies in which the alleged violator maintains credentials or holds professional membership. Some of these include the following:

National Board for Certified Counselors, Inc.
5999 Stevenson Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22304

National Council for Credentialing of Career Counselors
c/o NBCC
5999 Stevenson Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22304

National Academy for Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselors
5999 Stevenson Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22304

Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification
162 North State Street
Suite 317
Chicago, Illinois 60601

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
1717 K Street, N.W., Suite 407
Washington, D.C. 20006

American Psychological Association
1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Group Psychotherapy Association, Inc.
25 East 21st Street, 6th Floor
New York, New York 10010

About the Authors

Ben Cohn, Ed.D., is a counseling psychologist in private practice in Westchester County, New York, and was a pioneer in the application of group counseling to acting-out underachieving adolescents. Dr. Cohn received the "Eminent Career Award" presented by the Association fo Specialists in Group Work at the AACD convention in 1985.

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Both Dr. Cohn and Dr. Osborne have conducted training programs, workshops, and convention presentations nationally and internationally. The authors have published widely in professional journals, co-authored books and edited national publications.

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